

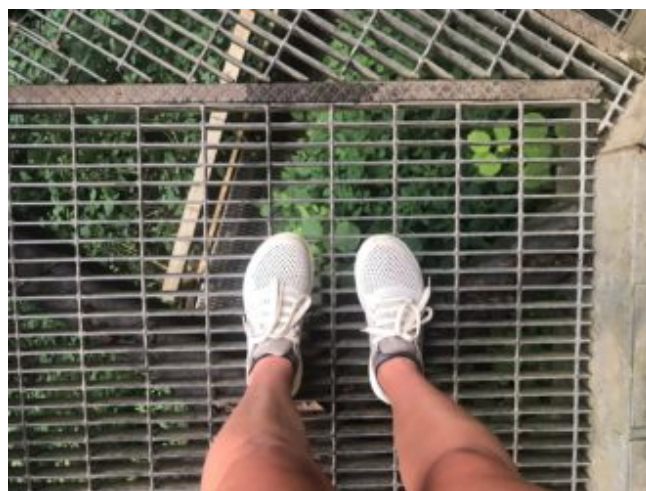
ACTIVITY AND EXERCISE

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Exercise and general activity are strong promoters of health and wellness. Numerous studies have shown that being active helps to improve one's physical and mental health and reduce the risk of chronic conditions. If chronic conditions are already present, exercise can help lower negative effects or complications of the condition. Everyone can be active with little to no cost, and benefits can be seen from even the smallest increase in activity level.

Activity and Physical Health

Regular exercise can lead to weight loss and will also make your heart stronger and more efficient. A person in good physical condition who exercises regularly is less likely to get tired during everyday activities. Exercise will strengthen muscles and bones over time, and help to burn stored fat.



A Walk in the Woods
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Activity and Mental Health

Regular exercise has been shown to improve mental health. The increase in blood flow from exercise sends more blood to the brain, which helps improve cognitive function as well as reduce anxiety, stress, and depression. In addition, exercise can improve self-esteem and create a better body image. Group exercise also allows for more social support and a sense of belonging, which improves mental health. Regular physical activity has even been shown to help with falling asleep and regulate a sleep cycle.

Activity and Chronic Conditions

While chronic conditions cannot be cured, there are many ways in which the risk for complications related to chronic conditions can be reduced. Regular physical activity is one of the biggest factors that help lower the risk of chronic illness, along with eating a balanced diet and refraining from smoking.

Management

Physical activity can be used as a means to manage the symptoms of chronic conditions. Regular exercise has been shown to strengthen the heart in those with heart disease, increase insulin sensitivity in people with type 2 diabetes, and reduce joint pain in those with arthritis.

Prevention

Physical activity has also been shown to reduce the risk of many chronic conditions before they are developed. Obesity has recently overtaken smoking as the leading preventable cause of illness. New

research shows that physical activity lowers the risk for certain types of cancer, and increases bone density, which lowers the risk for osteoporosis.

Recommended Activity Levels

The Department of Health and Human Services recommends at least 150 minutes a week of moderate aerobic physical activity or 75 minutes per week of vigorous aerobic activity. During moderate activity, one should be moving but still able to carry on a conversation (Talk Test). During vigorous activity, one is out of breath and not able to say more than a few words. It is recommended that aerobic activity be spread out over the course of a week, with at least 30 active minutes a day for adults or 60 minutes a day for children. Increased health benefits, such as weight loss and better physical health, are seen around 300 minutes a week of moderate activity.

Types of Physical Activity

Activity is not limited to just exercising in a gym or running on a treadmill. Activities like walking the dog, mowing grass, or vacuuming all count towards the goal of 150 minutes of activity a week. While traditional vigorous exercises certainly are beneficial to health and add to the overall active minutes, it is important to find a physical activity that is right for the individual and follow a routine to meet personal goals.

Additional Resources

If you have a chronic condition, consult your doctor to create an exercise regimen to manage your condition safely. As with other lifestyle changes, adding physical activity to the day is best done by setting small, achievable goals to complete regularly.

Sources

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